



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the OSCE's Head of Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Werner Wnendt

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 1, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States cordially welcomes Ambassador Werner Wnendt to his first formal appearance before the Permanent Council, and wishes to thank him for his very fine report.

Mr. Chairman, we are all aware that 2005 is a year of decision for Kosovo. We eagerly await the results of Mr. Eide's report on Standards. The United States attaches great importance to this subject and the possibility of future status talks.

Allow me to make several comments with regard to the Standards review:

First, Ambassador Eide has repeatedly said that the results of the review are not pre-ordained and that he has not yet reached a decision. The United States takes him at his word and once again urges Kosovo's provisional institutions of self-government to do likewise. The progress they make on achieving Standards in the next couple of weeks may make all the difference between a report that is favorable and one that is not.

The United States was outraged to learn of the shooting deaths of two Kosovo Serbs this weekend. We extend our condolences to the families of the victims and the communities in which they lived. We urge all residents of Kosovo to remain calm and to assist the police so that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

We note that a motive for their murder has not been established, and the UN Mission in Kosovo and local authorities have just begun the investigation. The capability of Kosovo's institutions to solve this kind of murder and prevent its recurrence, however, will be a critical test of Kosovo's ability to govern itself.

Mr. Chairman, whatever decision Ambassador Eide reaches in his Standards review, it is clear to us that Kosovo has entered a period of uncertainty and possible significant change.

If the Standards Review is positive, then Kosovo will embark on future status talks. The international community in Kosovo, in turn, may undergo a significant restructuring in the coming months. Ambassador Wnendt, therefore, is prudent to prepare his mission for the possibility of taking on new roles and challenges.

The Standards review should set the stage for the beginning of a process leading to Kosovo's future political status.

In connection with a possible restructuring, the United States is open to the possibility that the European Union may wish to take on some of the institution-building responsibilities at the national level that the OSCE has performed up until this point.

The international community may ask OMiK, on the other hand, to focus more on capacity-building at the municipal level. We believe that the Mission's well-established network of field offices makes it a natural candidate to perform this function.

Similarly, we could envision the Mission drawing on its extensive field structure to monitor implementation of any outcome of future status talks, as Ambassador Wnendt has suggested in his report. We also see OMiK as well suited to monitor the decentralization process, and to monitor the situation of minorities and human rights in general, which are duties that the OSCE traditionally has performed well.

We couldn't agree more with Ambassador Wnendt that flexibility and dialogue should be the watchwords of any transition. Because of the uncertainty facing Kosovo, the United States intends to keep an open mind on matters relating to OMiK's budget and staffing. We will consult closely with all delegations here in Vienna on OMiK's future, and encourage the Chairman and Secretariat to be in close contact with the European Union on the role it foresees for itself in Kosovo in order to help us with the programmatic decisions we must take here in Vienna.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to bring attention to an idea that Secretary General Perrin de Brichambaut included in his trip report from Kosovo last month. In it, he suggested that the OSCE explore the idea of further developing the Kosovo Police Service School to train police officers from the region or indeed the whole OSCE area, especially where the OSCE is actively involved in policing issues.

While endorsing such a role for the KPSS is clearly premature, the United States believes that this idea has merit and deserves serious consideration and investigation. Policing is a vital part of the mandates of many of the OSCE's seventeen missions. The work the KPSS has done has been a model of what the OSCE can do in this field of institution-building. We should take full advantage of its proven success by seeing if there are practical and cost-effective ways that other OSCE missions can draw on the KPSS's experience and knowledge.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.